

## [W. W. Adney]

1

[Rangelore?]

Range-lore

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San Angelo, Texas.

Page one

RANGE-LORE

"Well", says Mr. W. W. Adney, "I have never seen an Indian but I have been in every jail from here to Emporia, Kansas. I wore the jail out at Ballinger. They called me Calamity Bill." "Now," joined in Aunt Carrie, Mr. Adney's sister, "brother has always been what we tried to call a romancer for we didn't want to call him a plain liar. Even when we were very small children in Arkansas, he could always entertain us with stories of things conjured out of his imagination. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 Once the preacher was at our house for dinner and brother told such big ones that mother was mightily embarrassed before the preacher but he was so nice and said, 'Why, sister Adney, leave that boy alone. Some day he may be a great writer of stories which we'll all read with pleasure.'" "I did learn to write," continued Mr. Adney, "but didn't go to school much, for my father died when we were all small and I had to help the family. I remember in Arkansas of having big cyclones that blew down big pines. The thing that makes me remember that is that one time our old muley cow got after me and I rolled under one of those fallen trees. I had to stay there until some one could come and run that darned old heifer away.

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"We pulled up and came to West Texas where I began working. I did a man's work when I was fifteen years old. I freighted stuff in from Abilene for the soldiers in the fort here (Fort Concho) then when the railroad got to Ballinger. I hauled freight from there to the fort.

"A detachment of soldiers would be sent to the flat just this side of Sonora to bale hay. I used to freight the hay into the fort after it had been baled. I used two wagons and three teams- five horses and one mule. I drove them all with a lead rope on the mule.

"One time when I went home to Ballinger, the Colorado River was up and I had to cross the river to get home. The ferry-man didn't want to take me and my teams across but after some persuasion, he offered to take me and one wagon and team across for 2.50. I gave him a five dollar bill, he couldn't give me the change but said he would hand it to me. I waited and waited and finally asked for it. He told me that he didn't intend giving it to me, that the trip was worth the five dollars. Well, I told him I'd get even. I took my gun and went down and shot that fellow's chickens. I had a fine bunch killed before they stopped me. I had to go to jail but I got my [\$2.50?].

"I seemed to be mixed up with chickens a whole lot, not like "Chicken-Thief-Jim", though. He used to drive a hack around and when he would find people gone from home or all where they couldn't see him easily, he would scatter corn in his hack and could he catch chickens! An other chicken tale: When I was a young boy there were two old men who were always disputing as to which had the best chickens. One had Rhode Island Reds and the other had Plymouth Rocks. I got tired hearing those old fellows argue and argue, so I slipped around and changed chickens, put some Reds in with the Domineckers and the other way 'round. And were those old fellows sore! Each accused the other of having done it, and they pulled off the dirtiest fight I ever saw.

"If any one ever says that your knees won't knock 4 together from fright, I am here to tell him that he is a damn liar. When I was driving a freight wagon, I came in with the Word boys and unloaded at the fort. There was plenty feed in the forks of the river for our teams,

## Library of Congress

we had some money, so we decided to have some fun. We made straight for the Gray Mule Saloon. Rocky Rivers was proprietor of the saloon and that night he was 'tending bar. The building was long and narrow. There were about three hundred fellows there- negroes, [Mexicans?], whites, soldiers, gamblers- everything was in that building. About midnight a big fight started. The lights were put out and six-shooters began to pop. At the very first, I grabbed my gun, dropped to the floor and rolled under the counter. The only light came from those popping six-shooters. After the shooting stopped and the smoke began clearing, Rocky called for lights. With the first light, Rocky saw my feet sticking out from under the counter. He jerked out a gun in each hand and covered me but just about then he could see my face. 'That you, kid?' he inquired calmly, 'Just stay right where you are.' Three men were wounded, a [Mexican?] monte dealer, a soldier, and another man, but none were killed. By then I told the boys that I had already had enough fun for awhile. Besides I was young, sixteen years old, and needed some rest. About three o'clock I unrolled my bedding on the river bluff there the Troy 5 Laundry now stands. I always slept with my six-shooter at my head and my Winchester by my side. As I slept, I dreamed and went through that fight at the Gray Mule Saloon. The firing of the morning cannon at the fort came to me, its reverberations sounded among those rocks and before I was awake, I jumped off that high bluff into that river bed. I couldn't see anybody, but climbed out, so scared that I felt and heard my knees knocking.

"The youngest fellow on the works always had to take the "rawhiding," but I soon learned to hold my own. I was hired to work on "macaroni" farms, sent to buy "striped paint," but was not as bad as the fellow who looked all day in a mud puddle for a frog, because they needed it on the railroad.

"We used to haul freight over the country when there were no roads. Just faint wagon ruts were all there were to follow. We have camped many times at Panther Bluff. That was a camping place for all travelers. We were never bothered. There were some half-breeds, Mexican and Indian, who gave some trouble with their theiving ways. We used to have the "Night Riders" and "White Caps." They were "Vigilantes" who helped keep law in the newly

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organized country where the law was weak. We ran six men out of here. When they got to Sonora they hung them up just for fun and two of them didn't "come to" when they let them down.

"I was ashamed of a trick I played on one fellow, 6 but I told him about it twenty-five years after and he said, 'Dad-burn my hide, was that you?' It happened this way: Wild Bill worked on a ranch out from Ballinger. Every pay day he would come to town, get drunk, spend all his money and the last thing he would do on leaving town would be to empty his six-shooter at all the lights he could see.

"One night in Ballinger, the lights and crowds and excitement were all at Dan Sullivan's Saloon. I went in to enjoy the fun, but Sullivan said, 'Boy, this is no place for you. Get out and go home to your daddy.' I told him that I didn't have a daddy, that I was a man of my own, but anyhow he put me out. I sat across on the porch of an old building and how I did want to get in there and enjoy that fun. As I sat there, I could see the big lights of the chandelier over the transom and an idea came to me. I went around to my camp, got my Winchester and went back to the porch. I took aim and, shot that chandelier. What a clatter in that saloon! I stuck my gun under the steps, ran around the old house, out through the mesquite brush, and was coming up the other end of the street when Dan came out to investigate. 'Hey, kid, who has been along here?' he asked. 'I don't know-er nobody,' I replied. 'Did you see Wild Bill?' he asked. 'Yes,' said I. 'Well, we'll get him the next time we're out there.' In a few days they 7 brought Wild Bill in. He couldn't remember having shot the lights, but he paid the fine. Twenty-five years later, when I told him what I had done, he said that he had not had the faintest recollection of shooting out those lights.

"In Ballinger we had a mad named John Furmot. He was brave but dangerous. [?]. J. Ellis, driver, brought the stage to the stage stand one day and while the horses were being changed, the passengers and driver ate their dinner. John Furmot had eaten and was standing around. Two passengers began to talk of Furmot- how they had heard of him and how they would like to see him. Furmot jerked out his gun, shot a hole in the

## Library of Congress

table right under their hands and says, 'Well, here he is! Look at him.' Everybody fell over themselves and each other getting out of the room, except Ellis. He was always calm in every situation.

"I was a driver with Tony Montgomery. We went to every round-up and would deliver cattle wherever the owners wanted them taken. We have taken lots of cattle to the Goodnight Ranch and I wish I had all the cattle we have delivered to the 101 Ranch. Tony Montgomery was the finest fellow around a herd that ever was. He had a cuttin' horse called, Hog. He never rode Hog except around the herd. Tony could rope the best I ever saw too. He never missed a loop. He was a small man, but he was boss on the work. The funniest fight I ever saw was between him and an old fellow with long whiskers about twice as tall as Tony. This fellow slapped Tony and then kinder held him in his arms and began to spank him. Tony grabbed the old man's whiskers and began to yank with one hand and beat Riley (the other man) in the face with his free hand. Riley began to holler. They finally got down on the ground- Tony still holding to the whiskers. Riley began to call to the other boys to pull him off, but Tony's brother, Sam, wouldn't let the others interfere until Riley called, 'Enough.'

"I worked for Jonathan Miles on the Spindle S. When his stock was sold, we gathered the stock from all over the country and threw them into the Twin Mountain pasture. From there we shipped them to the buyers."

Aunt Carrie now saw a chance to talk some. "Mother kept a hotel in San Angelo," she said, "and I was her right hand helper. At first our hotel was just a hole in the wall but later we had a two-story house.

"Charley Milledge, the son of an English Lord and also a boy we called Patrick stayed with us for a long time. Patrick was an Irish Earl. The English peerage frequently sent their wild sons out here to get them out of their dignified homes. The families sent to these young man plenty of money every month so they ( the boys) were called "remittance men." One

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time I was coming down stairs with a pitcher of water and spilled it over the bannisters right on top of Charley Milledge. He laughed and laughed, but I was so mortified. 9 "When we were all small and living in Arkansas, my father ran a sawmill and grist mill not far from home. One day as mother worked at home, she could hear Tom Beezon's hounds baying in the woods but didn't pay any attention until brother Will came running in to tell that there was a wolf or a bear or something in the cow pen. When mother went out, there was deer in the lot with the hounds holding him at bay. Mother took the ax, hit that deer in the head and then chopped its head off. She then sent Miss Jennie, the girl who helped in the home, to bring father to dress the big buck. Here went Miss Jennie, running down the road to the mill. She met Uncle Ben on horseback and explained the situation so Uncle Ben rode furiously back to the mill calling to my father, 'John, hurry home, your wife and Miss Jennie have played the devil!' Father thought we had surely burned up the house but he dressed the deer and hung it up. Uncle Ben didn't let his horse rest. He told everybody for miles about mother killing that deer and that night they all serenaded mother. Of course they had to have some of the deer and there was hardly enough left for our breakfast.

"Mother's sister died on the '49 trail to California and was buried on the bank of a river. When they began colonizing the valley of southern California, mother wanted to go, but we just didn't have the money. We were 10 glad we didn't, for we heard afterward that it took \$50.00 to buy a forty-eight pound sack of flour."

"Texians ain't got no business going to California," said "Brother Will." "I have been there two times and Texas is the best country in the world, especially after us old fellows have cleaned up the Indians and the bad men and made this such a good place to live." Range-lore

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San Angelo, Texas.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

W. W. Adney, San Angelo, Texas, interviewed, January 18, 1938.